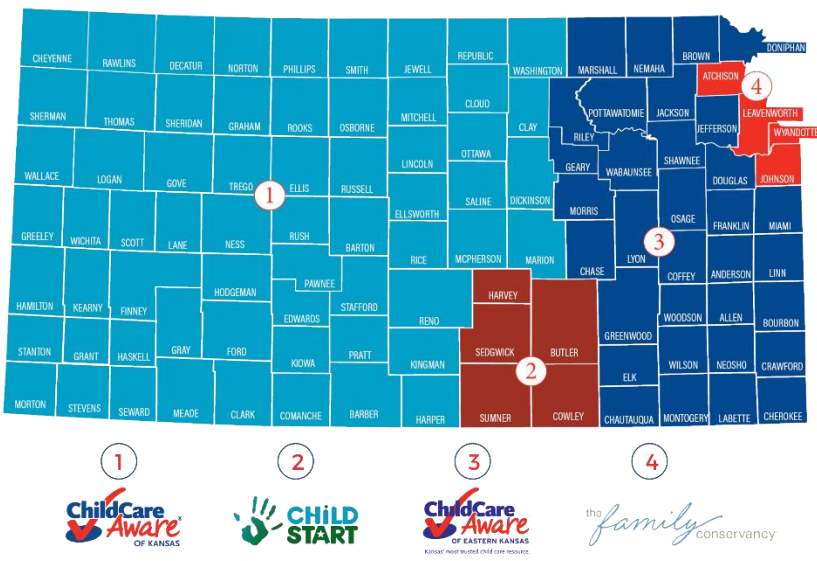




February 19, 2024

Chairperson Tarwater and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 2664. Child Care Aware of Kansas has been delivering services since 1993 with the vision that every community in Kansas values and supports early childhood development. Our mission is to ensure high-quality early education is accessible to all Kansas families and children. Child Care Aware of Kansas connects everyone with a stake in child care — parents, child care providers, businesses, local and state leaders, and community members — to the information and ideas they need. Child Care Aware of Kansas leads to a network of four child care resource and referral agencies across the state. Below is a map of our Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.



Our network is on the front lines, each and every day, working to connect families to high quality child care, partner with child care providers to enhance their business and collaborate with communities to build child care capacity and collecting and analyzing statewide data on child care to inform parents, providers, and decision-makers.



1. Provide referrals and information to families looking for child care

Being a parent is hard enough. They shouldn't have to worry about finding the right kind of care for their child while they work, go to school, or pursue their goals. Child Care Aware of Kansas helps families find the best child care options for their family, because we know just how important this decision is.

Child Care Aware of Kansas operates with a team of dedicated Resource Specialists who are committed to assisting families in finding child care options tailored to their specific needs. The Child Care Aware of Kansas Resource Center offers free referrals to families, with personalized child care referral services available through three main channels: 1.) individualized phone consultations via a toll-free number, 2.) an intuitive online child care search portal accessible through our website and linked to other state and regional early childhood partners' websites promoting early care and education, and 3.) in-person services provided at any of our regional child care resource and referral offices. From 2021 to 2023, the Child Care Aware of Kansas Resource Center supported 21,023 families in their quest for quality child care. (Funded by Department by Children and Families (DCF))

2. Support child care providers enhance their child care business

Child care programs, as many communities discovered in the past three years, are an essential, and incredibly important part of our economy. They ensure parents and families are able to join and stay in the labor force and employers are able to recruit and maintain employees. Additionally, child care providers are also business owners who impact our economy directly through job creation and as consumers of goods and services within their communities.

A child's earliest experiences lay the foundation for lifelong learning, well-being, and success. Quality early care and education opportunities provide the nurturing environments and relationships children need for healthy development from the start, while enabling parents to be productive members of the workforce.

Child Care Aware of Kansas (CCAAS) and Kansas Child Care Training Opportunity (KCCT) offers several quality initiative programs for child care programs. The following programs offered are:

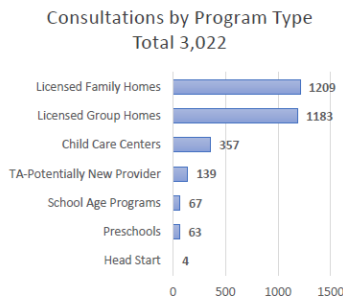
Child Care Health Consultants (CCHC): (Funded KDHE/DCF)

Our Child Care Health Consultants offer one-on-one coaching and planning sessions to potentially licensed or currently licensed providers in Kansas. CCHC works alongside child care programs to answer questions, support making small changes and plan for a long-term project. They can assist child care programs with a variety of topics related to health, safety and wellness like licensed child care guidance, grant funding opportunities, preparation for survey inspection child care recruitment, Health & safety support, community connections, health, safety & wellness policy development and implementation,



Illness and infectious diseases safety and injury prevention, emergency preparedness, health equity and children with special health care needs.

From October 2022 - September 2023 - The Child Care Health Consultant Network (CCHC) completed 3,022 consultations with 849 providers in Kansas:



From October 2022-September 2023, CCHC completed 9,172 additional engagements during this time, in 103 counties in Kansas (98% of counties). Consultants engaged with 2,330 providers in Kansas, or *49% of Kansas providers (including potential new providers). Additional engagements definition, exclude consultations, and include Networking and Support meetings, recruitment calls, other contacts, and attempted contacts to child care providers. (Funded by KDHE/DCF)

Program Administration Support: (Funded DCF)

Program Administration Support is a free service available to all licensed child care providers in the state of Kansas. Focused on promoting solid business practices in child care environments, we offer one-on-one coaching and planning sessions that are provider and program driven. (DCF)

- Accessing community resources
- Budgeting, contracts, marketing, and other business practices
- Strengthening policies and procedures so that businesses thrive
- Creating a plan to meet self-selected goals.
- Learning about new research and best practices in the early child care and education field.
- Getting referrals to other services and supports.
- Starting a new business on the right track

Quality improvement grant awards used to make changes based on business goals

Any licensed child care facility can receive 2 quality improvement awards to help them reach their business goal. Some ways these funds have been used:

- Staff bonuses
- Purchase a CCMS
- Purchase technology and software
- Office supplies
- Marketing materials
- Printing
- Security



Links to Quality (L2Q): (Funded DCF)

Links to Quality is a program that licensed Early Childhood Care and Education Programs can take part in to develop better business and program practices. L2Q recognizes child care programs that are working on the overall improvement of quality of care in the state of Kansas. L2Q make available support services, which will include coaching, mentoring, technical assistance, reviewing and assessing, to assist programs as they continuously improve and meet evidenced based quality indicators. (DCF)

Coaching and Mentoring with L2Q Consultants: This may include, but is not limited to: in-person consultation, phone calls, workshops, correspondence through emails, connection to community and national resources and various trainings. Early Childhood Care and Education Programs will have access to support services at any point throughout the process.

Group TA via Workshops: These will include in depth discussions regarding L2Q topic areas such as:

- Business Practices,
- Budgeting, Cash Flow
- Staffing
- Program Family Relations
- Communication, Family Support
- Marketing
- Health and Safety Best Practices
- Risk Management

Infant-Toddler Specialist Network (Kansas Child Care Training Opportunity-KCCTO) (Funded DCF)

The Infant Toddler Specialist Network (ITSN) offers a statewide system of support to improve the quality of child care for infants and toddlers. Functions of the project include providing training and technical assistance to licensed child care programs serving infants and toddlers, collaborating with partners, and maintaining program infrastructure to ensure consistency and availability of services statewide.

Training and technical assistance are delivered at various levels of intensity.

- a. Staff make available training, resources, and just-in-time technical assistance to support early childhood care and education professionals with challenges faced in their day-to-day work.
- b. Staff provide more-focused supports, including goal-based technical assistance, training and technical assistance on priority topic areas, and opportunities to engage in pursuit of Kansas Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsement.
- c. Staff implement intensive, long-term plans for quality improvement, including training, frequent individualized coaching, opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, and access to quality improvement materials.

ITSN project staff host Infant Toddler Community Conversations to engage child care providers and support-service providers (mental health professionals, early interventionists, etc.) about the needs of infants and toddlers in their respective communities and make connections between available services. Additional engagement opportunities are designed to support collaboration between early intervention practitioners and child care providers serving children with disabilities. Project staff also participate in



other state, regional, and local committees, workgroups, and advisory groups to stay engaged and informed of the early childhood system in Kansas.

- KCCTO ITSN 2023 Technical Assistance Efforts
 - Total Technical Assistance Engagements (ITSN ONLY): 1,790
 - Technical Assistance Engagements with Home-Based Providers (ITSN ONLY): 764
 - Home-Based Providers Reached (ITSN ONLY): 203

Workforce Development (Kansas Child Care Training Opportunity-KCCTO): (Funded DCF)

In partnership with Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO), Child Care Aware of Kansas provides coaching, technical assistance, and financial support to an additional licensed family child care providers across the state working toward NAFCC accreditation. In 2023, 168 coaching and technical assistance visits, and 20 community learning group meetings were completed. NAFCC Specialists supported 10 providers in developing their Individualized Professional Development Plan and 26 training plans. The NAFCC Specialist conducted 48 coaching, technical assistance contacts and 16 group contacts. One licensed family child care provider has earned accreditation, one has renewed her accreditation and 2 have applied for accreditation. Financial support of NAFCC memberships, CCPC of KS memberships, registration, travel and accommodations for attendance at a state early childhood conference, and accreditation materials, self-study and application fees were provided.

With support of system partners, KCCTO is currently leading the building of a statewide Workforce Registry. The purpose of the Registry is to provide professionals with an online repository for professional development goals and accomplishments (virtual commonplace) and inform system policy conversations and decisions to advance the workforce and investments. The primary users of the Registry will include individual professionals (any individual who identifies as a part of the ECCE workforce; initial launch will target child care professionals working in licensed and unlicensed [legally exempt] settings - e.g., family child care and center-based professionals), network partners, licensed child care facilities, and state agencies. Key components of the Registry include a Learning Management System (LMS) module, Professional Development (PD) module, and Quality Recognition module (QRIS/Links to Quality). Essential functions of the Registry include:

- Ability to interface with existing systems (a system of systems)
- Enable professionals to document, validate, and verify their professional learning, credentials, certificates, degrees, and experience
- Support professionals in accessing ongoing professional development opportunities, resources, and employment that align with career goals (integrates with the Career Pathway [Strategy 6.1.2])
- Provide the system (agencies, policy makers, partners) rich data reporting related to demographics, compensation, recruitment, retention, sustainability, and overall workforce trends



KCCTO WFD and ITSN 2023 Training Efforts

- Total Enrollments: 36,044
- Total Providers Reached: 12,283
- Home-Based Provider Enrollments: 11,229
- Home-Based Providers Reached: 3,341

Shared Services (Funded DCF)

The Shared Services Network operates through Network Hubs, which can be either a single organization or collaborating entities. These Hubs act as operational centers for early care and education shared services networks in Kansas. Services provided by each Network Hub are tailored to meet the specific needs of providers in their respective areas. Providers have the flexibility to choose the services they need for their programs, with no requirement to participate in all offerings or a predetermined number of services to be eligible. This approach ensures that providers can customize their participation in the Shared Services Network based on their unique requirements and priorities.

To inform the selection of services, network hubs employ a comprehensive approach, drawing insights from various sources. Survey results, feedback from providers, and guidance from Opportunities Exchange are key elements considered in the decision-making process. By incorporating these diverse perspectives and leveraging external expertise, the network hubs strive to tailor their services to the unique requirements of Kansas Child Care Providers. This collaborative and forward-thinking approach underscores our dedication to fostering an environment of continuous improvement and innovation within the Shared Services Network.

Free Child Care Management Software (CCMS) Statewide

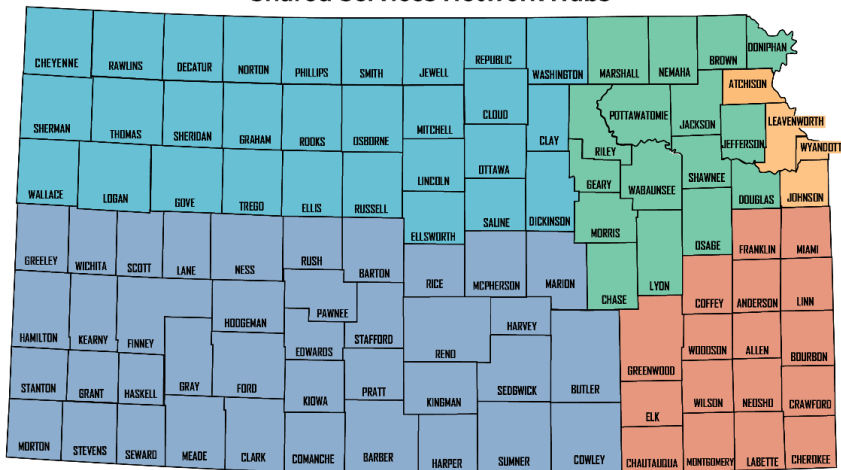
Since April 2023 Child Care Aware of Kansas has offered free 14-month subscriptions to either [Playground](#) or [Brightwheel](#) which are both child care management software. These have been available to all KDHE licensed facilities (family child care, group home and child care centers) in the state. The foundation of a Shared Service Networks is child care management software, which can help providers communicate with families and staff; set up reminders; handle scheduling and calendars; manage billing, reporting, and enrollment; and much more. The software also helps providers determine where additional support is needed, such as janitorial, maintenance, or administrative services. Providers connect with the Regional Community Consultants that are located throughout the state for technical assistance on either of the systems. Staff collaborate closely with both vendors to also receive information regarding updates and to field any questions that come up from providers/programs. To date, there are 764 programs accessing one of the programs—565 home based/family child care and 199 center based programs.



Established Shared Service Network Hubs:

- Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas
- Child Care Aware of Kansas
- Community Children’s Center
- Northwest Kansas Economic Innovation Center, Inc.
- The Family Conservancy

Shared Services Network Hubs



Northwest Kansas Economic Innovation Center, Inc.
Child Care Aware of Kansas
Community Children's Center
Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas
The Family Conservancy



Services offered by the Shared Services Network Hubs

CHILDCARE AWARE OF KS	CHILDCARE AWARE OF EASTERN KS	THE FAMILY CONSERVANCY	COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S CENTER	NW KS ECONOMIC INNOVATION CENTER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulk Ordering • Center Sub Services • FCC Sub Scholarships • Lending Library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laminating Services • Professional Totes • Sub Pool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub Service: Customized Early Education • Social Media Marketing • Website Creation Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood Human Resource Services • Legal Services • Translation Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lending Library • Professional Development • Sub Recruitment • Technology

Regional Community Consultant (Funded DCF)

Regional Community Consultants (RCC’s) are available to provide coaching on a variety of areas to support the work of child care providers-learning environment, child development, behavior management, nutrition, business support. Monthly RCC’s provide a learning community where providers

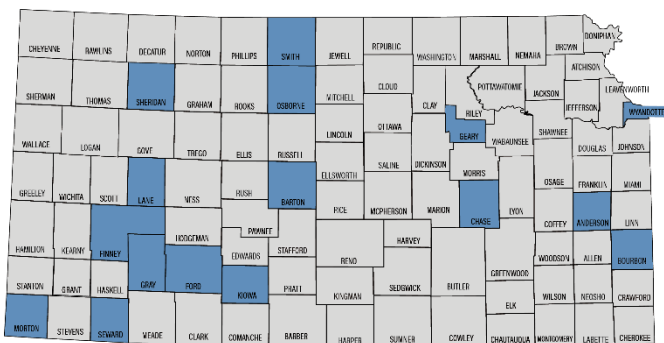


come together to share resources and to connect with opportunities in their communities, region, or state. RCC's provide support through either in-person or virtually. On a quarterly basis, leadership training is offered by the RCC's to all programs interested in increasing their skills.

Baby Steps (Private funding)

Baby Steps, is an innovative pilot effort to expand access to care for infants and toddlers in rural communities with high birth rates and low child care supply. The project will provide a financial incentive to family child care providers to serve additional infants within their child care license requirements and will prioritize high-quality care by connecting participating child care providers to Kansas' Infant Toddler Specialist Network.

The Baby Steps pilot project is currently serving 62 family child care programs and providing access to care to 64 infants in 16 Kansas counties.



3. Collecting statewide data on child care to inform parents, providers, and decision-makers.

Child Care Aware of Kansas collects and shares data, research findings, and best practices sourced from industry experts. This ensures that parents, providers, and policymakers have access to insights and solutions for enhancing the quality of early care and education. Our extensive [point in time data](#), categorized by county, serves to support local communities, including families, employers, and community leaders, in addressing significant child care shortages. Alongside this data, Child Care Aware of Kansas produces an annual report on Child Care Supply and Demand. (Funded by DCF)

4. Partnering with communities to build child care capacity.

Child Care Aware of Kansas and our partners work alongside communities to tackle the lack of access to affordable, quality child care. Our work is grounded in an asset-based approach to community capacity-building: we firmly believe that communities themselves are best positioned to develop and implement the right solutions to their unique needs. Our work with communities begins by using the Child Care Supply Demand Action Plan: Making Child Care a Priority in Your Community framework to assess community-level capacity and readiness along a five-point continuum as follows: 1) emerging knowledge



of child care needs, 2) evaluating community needs, 3) establishing early childhood as a priority, 4) enhancing early learning, and 5) expanding access to early learning opportunities. Establishing collaborative partnerships with communities is essential in strengthening child care capacity, ensuring broad access to high-quality early childhood education services. This collaborative approach not only fosters the development of a more equitable and accessible early childhood education framework but also delivers manifold benefits for children, families, and communities alike. Engaging with community stakeholders allows for the creation of tailored solutions to address specific challenges and deficiencies in child care accessibility and quality.

Child Care Aware of Kansas Community Outreach Engagement Coordinators have engaged with 97% of communities in Kansas since 2021. Operating within a systematic approach, our Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) partners collaborate with communities to tailor resources and support to their needs, leveraging expertise in research and comprehensive data on child care supply and demand. Through a five-phase approach—pre-planning and support, Communities in Action workshops, funding allocation, follow-up support, and the Child Care Go Team initiative—we empower communities to realize their vision of a robust early care and education system that meets the needs of all children and families.

The **Child Care Go Team**: Community Mobilization and Rapid Response supports the Community Child Care Capacity-Building Approach. This team, known as CCGT, is designed to promptly and efficiently deploy local, regional, and state resources to address specific community needs and barriers related to building child care capacity. The team focuses on identifying community assets, securing resources and funding, suggesting child care solutions, navigating state and local licensing, and addressing building regulations. The team also facilitates connections to quality enhancement initiatives and best practices in child care.

The composition of CCGT remains flexible, adapting to the distinctive needs of each community and leveraging expertise at the local, regional, and state levels, as necessary. State members of the Child Care Go Team include representatives from various agencies, such as the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas Department of Commerce, Kansas Department for Children and Families, Kansas State Fire Marshal, Kansas Children's Cabinet, Kansas Association for the Young Children, Child Care Provider Coalition, and Kansas Department of Education. This team meets monthly to connect on current community barriers and communicate any predicted upcoming barriers. Since December 2022, the Go Team has assisted **29 communities with barriers**.

When a community encounters a child care barrier, the Child Care Go Team Manager is contacted. The Manager initiates a rapid assessment of the barriers and needs, starting with an email to all Go Team members to inform them of the situation. If the Manager can address the barrier directly, they outline the solution in the email. If additional assistance is required, Go Team members provide input on how



they can help. The Go Team Manager ensures the community barrier remains a priority by frequently checking in with the community until the issue is resolved. (Funded by DCF and KUCCPR-PDG)

Child Care Aware of Kansas shares the Committee's goals of increasing access to child care, however as outlined above the services outlined in HB 2664 are a duplication of services already being offered by Child Care Aware of Kansas and Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities because of that we are opposed to HB2664.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tanya Koehn".

Tanya Koehn
Interim Executive Director
Child Care Aware of Kansas